A DUCK HARD TO KILL

The Screaming Walloon Is Something of a Diver Too.

The screaming walloon is a hard duck to kill. Its hide is very tough and is thickly covered with feathers and down. Besides, the bird is a great diver, one of the kind that used to "dive at the flash" when hunted with the old arm that flashed when fired. It is of very little value for table use, being so tough. The only way to manage it at all is to skin it and parboil it in a big pot with plenty of water. The negroes make caps of walloon skins.

"They are great ducks for diving," says a well known Tred Avon river progger. "They can dive quicker, go down deeper, remain under water longer and come up farther away than any other duck that frequents our waters. I remember once I succeeded in killing a walloon, and, being short of game for the table, I determined to cook my bird. I got a negro to skin it, giving him the hide for his trouble. After being cleaned we put it in a great pot full of water and under it kindled a hot fire. After awhile I wanted to see how the cooking of my duck progressed and lifted the top off the boiling pot, but there was so much steam escaping I could not see into the pot and struck a match over it. The blamed walloon, sir, dived at the flash of the match. It disappeared and has never been seen since."—Baltimore Sun.

A WINTER ROMANCE

By M. QUAD

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Jed Smith was a farmer's son twenty years old. He was uneducated, uncouth and awkward, but he had romance in his soul. He fell in love with the new schoolma'am at once, and as he was the biggest of the boys and could lick any one of them he felt that he had the best chance. He was going to marry Miss Seymour or know the reason why. When he began to betray signs of his love his father took him out to the barn and turned on him to say:

"Now, Jed Smith, don't you go and make no ding dang fool of yourself!"

It was plain, sensible talk, but Jed wouldn't take it that way. He was a poor reader, but he had digested so many love novels that he wasn't going to let go without a try for it. He had drawn the schoolma'am on his hand sled, he had skated with her, they had slid down hill together, he had brought her the biggest apples of any one, but there was really nothing in these things to arouse her romance, and he realized that romance must come before love. After thinking over it for ten long nights and losing hours of sleep he got his plan. The schoolma'am must be abducted and he must rescue her. At first the trouble seemed to be to find the abductor, but Jed Smith had a way with him. Having got the next biggest boy in the district out to the barn with him, he unfolded his plan and added:

"Jim, you've got to bear the schoolma'am away, and I've got to rescue her. You've got to turn your coat wrong side out and wear a mask and speak in a hoarse voice. In rescuing her I've got to give you a mighty good licking, but as I am going to give you 50 cents you mustn't mind that."

Jim demurred. He didn't want to abduct a schoolma'am, and he didn't want to be licked. He came to it in time, however. Fifty cents in cash was not to be sneezed at, and he would be licked if he refused to enter into the plot. It took some little time to perfect the details, but at last everything was ready. Jed's old father saw fresh "signs," and he took him to task again.

"Jed," he said, "if you are going to make a fool of yourself in any way, then look out for me!"

In winter, especially on a cloudy day, it begins to get dark soon after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The schoolma'am had often to stay after school had been dismissed to look over the work for the next day. She had only half a mile to go when ready. Sometimes two or three pupils stayed and walked along with her; sometimes she was alone. Luck aided the conspirators. It was young Jim Andrews who was to do the abducting part. His father's barn was near the schoolhouse, and he could both watch and have a horse ready harnessed. Jed Smith was to be waiting up the road.

One afternoon the signal was given, and the plot was afoot. The teacher had remained until almost 5. She was just donning cloak and hat when a masked villain appeared before her and announced in an awful voice:

"Come with me! If you scream or struggle it means death!"

Miss Seymour was properly shocked. She had never seen a masked villain before. No man, holding a peach stone in his mouth to make his voice terrible, had ever thus addressed her. She thought she recognized the figure, and there was a something about the terrible voice that sounded familiar, but she grew faint, her knees weakened, and she was about to sit down when the villain seized her with a grip of steel and bore her out to his sleigh. She screamed and struggled, but she had to go. Jed Smith had said that it would be all the better for the plot if she screamed and struggled. More credit would be due him for rescuing her.

What neither of the plotters had counted on was that some one might come driving along the highway at the critical moment. Some one did come. He was a man without romance in his soul. He was driving a fast horse to a cutter, and when the masked man swung the schoolma'am into his sleigh and started off at a gallop the stranger followed on and cracked his whip and shouted to let the girl know that help was at hand. She heard him, and so did Jim and his horse. In fact, the horse ran away, and just as he reached the point where the rescuer stood waiting he shied into a drift and things were upset. Jed jumped forward, but he had scarcely roared out, "Die, villain!" when he was knocked silly by the stranger. Then the struggling Jim caught it. The schoolma'am was pulled out of the robes and blankets and stood one side, and then her rescuer went in to have some fun with abductor and rescuer.

He stood them on their heads in the drifts; he jammed them about; he walloped them up and down, and when they shouted for mercy he walloped the harder. Then, when tired out, he lifted the girl into his cutter and drove her home. It did not break up the school; it simply broke up the romance of the thing. When Farmer Smith had got through using the gad on the battered Jed he threw it aside and said:

"You was after romance, and I'll give you nuff of it. There's 200 bushels of corn to be husked and shelled, and it's going to be your work from now on to next Fourth of July. Rescuing a gal! Why, durn you, you don't know nuff to rescue an old cabbage head!"

A Vision

By F. A. MITCHEL

"Are you ill, sir?"

I looked up dazed. I made no reply, for I was engaged in getting my bearings.

"This is the Tower?" I asked presently.

"Yes, sir."

I was sitting on a bench in an open court in the Tower of London. Before me was a piece of pavement different from the rest, some fifteen or twenty feet square and in its center a plate on which was an inscription. I remembered being the evening before in the quarters of one of the Tower officials, and that was all. How I came to be seated on the bench in the early morning I have never to this day fully determined. At 11 I had started for my lodgings in Oxford street, but I could not remember going there. One of the Tower attendants, commonly called "beefeaters," had roused me.

If how I came to be there is a mystery, what I saw there is a still greater one. I had been sitting a long while. Of that I was fully conscious. Whether it was night or day I have no recollection, but the scene I witnessed seems to me to have been enacted in the day. My first remembrance is hearing shouts of "Long live Queen Mary!" but they seemed to come from without the inclosure. Within a few persons hurried by silently, as if in preparation for some momentous event. They were all serious, and one or two of them were in tears.

Then I was conscious of a number of persons sitting with me about the square bit of pavement, though the seats on which they sat were of rough hewn wood. The men wore trunks, hose, doublets and hats decorated with feathers, the women stomachers and large ruffled collars. Covering the square place on the pavement I have mentioned was a platform on which rested a rectangular block of wood about two feet high and hollowed at the top on both sides. Beside it, leaning on a huge ax, was a tall figure in tight fitting costume. Those about the platform, which was plainly a scaffold, wore serious countenances. Without the Tower inclosure I heard sounds indicating commotion: "The duke's finished; death to all traitors!" A man sitting next me whispered to another, "It's all over up on the hill."

A horror crept over me. I would gladly have gone away, but had no power to move. Looking down toward the other end of the court where there were buildings for dwelling purposes, I saw a lovely apparition at a window, a young girl apparently from seventeen to twenty years old. At the same time I heard the rumbling of a cart. Two young girls attendant on the one at the window tried to draw her away, but she would not go.

"It is the body of her husband," I heard some one say. "He's been executed on Tower hill."

When the cart had passed there was an interval that my memory fails to fill, but the next scene was the opening of the door under the window at which the young lady had appeared, and she came out with an officer, attended by the two girls I had seen with her and a priest. She came toward the scaffold reading from a book and praying. When she reached the scaffold she ascended the steps with as much composure as if she were going to her chamber and stood waiting for silence. When it came she spoke to the people, but I have no remembrance of what she said. There she knelt, prayed and asked permission of the priest to say a psalm.

These religious features ended, she took off her gloves and her kerchief, which she handed to one of her maids, and loosened her gown. The executioner knelt before her and asked forgiveness for what he was about to do. The girl then tied a handkerchief over her eyes with her own hands. Groping for the block, she asked, "Where is it?" Guided to it, she knelt and laid her neck on it, saying, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The last I remember was the ax swinging over her.

"Have you been sitting here all night, sir?" asked the attendant.

"I don't know. I have a vague recollection gradually coming back to me of having followed last night when I started to go home a figure dressed in singular costume."

At that moment my eyes rested on the plate in the center of the marked square. I saw the name Lady Jane Grey. I read that she, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard were all executed there. My horror of the night before returned. I rose and was staggering away when the attendant, putting his arm through mine, assisted me, taking me to the gate and calling a cab for me. I was driven to my lodgings and did not leave them for a fortnight.

When I got out I had a longing to know something of Lady Jane Grey, but dreaded to bring back my experience of that grewsome night. After a few months had passed I mustered courage to read her life. I found events attending her execution the same as I witnessed in my vision, my dream or whatever it was. Those who attended her at her death have testified to her serenity.

Years afterward in a gallery of a noble family of England I saw a portrait of Lady Jane Grey's husband, Lord Guildford Dudley. He was the man who led me to the place of the scaffold.

A Pardon

By HARRY VON AMBERG

"You, boy! Come out o' that and help bring on the wood."

So called the mate of a steamboat on the Mississippi to a pale faced boy lying in his bunk. It was at night, and the weather was stormy.

"I can't; I'm sick."

"You hain't goin' to work yer passage on this yere boat sojern there. Git up, I say, and carry your load."

The boy made a feeble attempt to rise, but failed. The mate seized a stick of wood and held it over the invalid.

"You git up or I'll brain you!"

Fear gave the boy additional strength, and he managed to pull himself out and stagger over the gang plank to a wood pile which the deck hands were transferring to the boat. He worked as best he could till the task was finished, then crawled back to his bunk and fell fainting in it.

This boy, Robert Stewart, was so poor that in order to get from New Orleans to St. Louis he was obliged to work his passage on a steamboat. The mate was a powerful man, and the boy, who was ill with a fever, was completely at his mercy. What made the act still more brutal was that there were plenty of deck hands to do the work without calling out a sick boy. There was something fiendish in the mate's nature that led him to this act of cruelty.

Years passed meanwhile. That sick boy was moving in one direction, while the mate who had tyrannized over him and had nearly cost him his life was moving in another. The one was rising, the other sinking. Schooled in adversity, Robert Stewart possessed that within him which enabled him to triumph over obstacles, the hardships he had endured furnishing a spur to send him onward and upward. Successful in his own affairs, the people intrusted him with theirs. In time his name became known to every one in Missouri. He rose to be governor.

One day a man was brought to the governor from the penitentiary as an applicant for pardon. He was a large, powerful fellow, and the moment the governor looked at him he started. Then he scrutinized the criminal long and closely. Without speaking he turned to his desk, picked up the paper on which the man's pardon had been made out and wrote his name at the bottom of it. Before handing it to the prisoner he said to him:

"I fear it will be useless, perhaps wrong, for me to grant you this pardon."

The man stood stolidly waiting to know the governor's reason.

"You will commit some other crime and be sent to the penitentiary again."

"No, governor; I promise you that I will not."

The governor looked doubtful. He was apparently turning something over in his mind. Finally he said:

"You will go back on to the river—as mate on a steamer, I suppose."

"Yes, governor; I'll go back to work at any position I can get."

"Well," the governor continued, "before I pardon you I wish you to make me a promise."

The man looked interested and waited. The chief magistrate was in no hurry. The mass of business awaiting his attention was forgotten in this pardon case. There must be something in it to move him so strangely. For a few minutes there was a faraway look in his eyes. He seemed to be picturing something. That it was a painful scene was evident from his expression. Then he turned to the criminal and said impressively:

"I wish you to pledge your word that when you go back to the river as mate on a steamboat you will never drive a sick boy from his bunk to load your boat on a stormy night."

The criminal looked at the governor in a vain attempt to understand why he imposed upon him such a singular condition. Then he made the required promise, asking at the same time for an explanation. Finally the governor gave it:

"One night many years ago you were mate of a steamboat running between New Orleans and St. Louis. On that boat was a boy sick with a fever. One night when the wind blew cold and the rain came down in torrents you drove that boy out of his bunk and forced him to carry wood.

"Now, there are two reasons why I don't wish you to do that again. The first is that I desire any boy you might so treat to escape your cruelty. Another time it might cost him his life. The second is that he might become governor of his state and you might commit another crime and come before him with an application for pardon."

The man stood looking at the governor, a faint glimmer of memory struggling in his brain. But with a life of so many brutal acts behind him it was hard for him to remember one which at the time he had considered of so little importance.

The governor handed him his pardon.

"I was that boy," he said. "That document is my revenge. But another time the governor's revenge might be of a different kind. The pardoning power is lodged in the chief magistrate alone, and another governor might see fit to refuse clemency. Go! Try to earn an honest living without brutality."

The criminal slunk away, but whether or not the lesson had any effect on him there is no available record.

TWIN SPIRITS

By ESTHER VANDEVEER

He was a genius—a genius of the brush. When at his easel he was completely absorbed. At such time no one could secure his attention. His luncheon was brought in every day and set down beside him; but, although the servant was instructed to call his attention to it, he seldom knew that it was there. Often after he had finished his work for the day he would feel faint for want of food. Then he would arise to get some and frequently knocked over the stool on which his lunch had been placed and broke the dishes.

She was a poetess. She had had a lover; but, finding that she didn't feel those heavenly thrills of which she had written of people in such condition, she had broken off her engagement with him. She had seen the artist's pictures and was sure she loved the man who painted them. She burned to know him and asked every friend she possessed to introduce her. But none of them was acquainted with him.

But her yearning for him would not down. She resolved to visit him in his studio. A friend to whom she had given her confidence advised her to "brush up a bit," leave off her black alpaca and put on silk. But the recommendation did not impress her. Love was a matter of the soul; it had nothing to do with clothes, whereupon her friend admonished her to wear something pretty all the same.

She went to his studio, climbed several flights of stairs—she was delicate, and the effort made her heart throb violently—and tapped softly at the door. There was no response. No sound came from within. She tried the doorknob, turning it gently, then pushed the door slightly ajar. He was there. He sat at his easel before a canvas on which were a divine face and figure. The latch slipped back, making a sound. She started, thinking it would betray her. No; he went on painting. What a noble brow! His tumbled hair—it was thin—caressed the crown of his august head.

What should she do? Should she break the spell under which he worked by speaking? No; there was a chair near by. She would go and sit upon it till he came to himself or from himself. So she went softly to the chair, keeping her eyes upon him the while, and sat down.

Alas, she sat upon a palette—a palette on which were soft paints of many bright colors!

She sat looking at him, yearning for him. Presently he looked aside from his work and straight at her. Through his eyes looked a great spirit. But they did not see her; they were as those of a somnambulist. He turned his gaze back to his easel.

For another half hour he worked. She would no sooner drag him down from his idea flight than she pulled down herself when a poem was welling up in her own heart.

Presently she arose to go. She had seen him. Her soul had caressed his. It was enough.

But unfortunately something fell on the floor.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "I've been waiting for you. I must put in the eyes." Then, without waiting, he went on: "A little closer, please. There, face the light."

At the same time he turned and looked into her eyes. He thought she was his model. But she did not know it. She thought that his lofty intellect had stalked over the gap of a want of acquaintance.

Then he began to paint, putting her own dark, poetic eyes into the head on the canvas, turning often to look into those of flesh and blood. In her poetic imagination she fancied that he was taking, spiritually, her eyes from her body and placing them in the head of an angel.

At last the work was finished. He arose, stood at a short distance from it, viewed it critically, made a few touches, threw down his brush, put his hand in his pocket, fished out a plug of black tobacco and bit off a quid.

As her romance, pierced to the heart, died within her she gave a little cry. He turned and looked at her through eyes from which the light of Genius Creatrix had gone out and saw her as she was, a lean, homely old maid with handsome eyes.

"Who in thunder are you?" he blurted.

Poor woman! Had the romance remained it would have been quite embarrassing enough, but it had vanished with the appearance of the tobacco. What to say she did not know. There was but one thing for her to do—leave the studio. She slunk toward the door. He followed her with his eyes.

"Stop!" he said suddenly, making a few quick strides toward her. Was he going to break even the fragments of the idol she had raised and how? He seized her skirt—that part of it which hung in rear—and, spreading it out, exclaimed:

"Great Scott!"

"What is it?" she asked, not being able to see behind her.

"You've been sitting on my palette!" he said, surveying the wreck of her dress ruefully. The dress was a confusion of vermilion, prussian blue, chrome yellow, violet and other colors.

Then, telling her to wait, he rushed for turpentine and other articles and in a quarter of an hour had got off the most of the paint. As she passed out he said:

"Thank you for the use of your eyes."